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**Descriptive Summary of 1989–90
Beginning Postsecondary Students:
Five Years Later**

**With an Essay on Postsecondary Persistence and
Attainment**

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Foreword

This report describes the status after 5 years of the diverse groups of students who first entered postsecondary education during the academic year 1989–90. It describes their economic and demographic characteristics, their educational objectives, the types of institutions they attended, their experiences while enrolled, and their persistence and attainment through the spring of 1994. In addition, this report describes the work experiences of these first-time students, both while enrolled and after they left postsecondary education.

The data for this report were drawn from the second follow-up of the 1990 Beginning Postsecondary Students (BPS) Longitudinal Study conducted in the spring of 1994. The BPS sample was drawn from students who participated in the 1990 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS), a nationally representative cross-sectional survey of graduate and undergraduate students.

The 1990 BPS Study included not only students who enrolled immediately after high school, but also students who delayed their postsecondary studies. Thus, this study is a departure from previous National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) longitudinal studies of high school cohorts, in that it provides information for a steadily growing segment of the postsecondary student population—those who delay their initial entry into postsecondary education. Students in both academic and vocational programs are represented in the survey.

This report begins with an essay that describes the persistence and attainment of the 1989–90 beginning students in postsecondary education after 5 years. The essay explores persistence and attainment rates from several different perspectives and examines the factors associated with lower rates of completion among nontraditional students. Following the essay is a compendium of tables which provide more detail about persistence and attainment, student characteristics, educational financing, employment experiences, marriage, family formation, civic participation, and graduate education.

The estimates presented in this report were produced using the public access BPS:90/94 Data Analysis System (DAS). The DAS is a microcomputer application that allows users to specify and generate their own tables from the BPS data. The DAS produces design-adjusted standard errors necessary for testing the statistical significance of differences shown in the tables. Additional information about the DAS, and how it may be obtained, is included in appendix C of this report.

We hope that the information provided in this report will be useful to a wide range of interested readers, and that the results reported here will encourage others to use the BPS data. We welcome recommendations for improving the format, content and analytic approach to make the subsequent descriptive reports more informative and accessible.

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